

request for support by a clerk at a selling area and instructions containing a result of counting of object commodities, to the clerk computer 10B. A request for support by a clerk at a selling area is issued by an inventory employee, who is at a remote place from the selling area, requests to a clerk at the selling area to carry out an operation that by an inventory employee (who is in a remote place) is unable to perform.

For example, if remote control of the manipulator 30A to change the position of the desired object commodity fails or the manipulator 30A is not installed in the shop, a request to change the position of the desired object commodity is issued. When the expiration date of the desired object commodity in the image displayed on the management display 53A or 53B is obscured, the inventory employee may request a clerk at the selling area to check the expiration date of the desired object commodity instead of requesting the clerk to change the position of the desired object commodity. If the inventory employee finds one or more expired object commodities by checking of expiration dates of the object commodities, the inventory employee requests a clerk at the selling area to remove (discard) the expired object commodities from the selling area. If it is difficult for the inventory

employee to count the object commodities looking through the display 53A or 53B due to customers' movement of some of the object commodities, the inventory employee requests a clerk at the selling area to count the object commodities or to change the positions of the object commodities.

At that time, the inventory employee transmits a marked image, in which one or more expired object commodities that are to be removed are labeled with the predetermined special marks by the marker 55, to the clerk computer 10B together with a request for support by a clerk at the selling area. Upon confirming the marked image and the request for support by a clerk at the selling area on the display 16B, the clerk at the selling area performs proper operation (changing the position of the object commodity, checking the expiration date of the object commodity, removing the expired object commodities) in accordance with the request for support by a clerk at the selling area from the inventory employee.

The remote management apparatus 50 may be a mobile information terminal 50C, such as a mobile telephone, as an alternative to the inventory computers 50A and 50B.

(A-3) Arrangement of various elements of the tele-inventory system:

An arrangement of various elements of the tele-inventory system 100 of FIG. 2 will now be described with reference to FIG. 3. FIG. 3 shows an arrangement of various elements of the
5 tele-inventory system 100. The TV camera 20A and the inventory computers 50A and 50B are arranged as shown in the example in FIG. 3. The same reference numbers in FIG. 3 as those described above with reference to FIGS. 1 and 2 designate identical
10 elements or parts, so any repetitious description is omitted here.

A company owning a multiple of chain shops, such as convenience stores, installs the TV camera 20A, camera positioning device 21A, the control
15 computer 10A (not shown in FIG. 3) and clerk computer 10B (not shown in FIG. 3) in the individual stores. Similarly, a department store having multiple selling floors installs the TV camera 20A, the camera positioning device 21A, the control computer 10A
20 (not shown in FIG. 3) and the clerk computer 10B (not shown in FIG. 3) on every selling floor.

An image of an individual object commodity 81 disposed on a commodity shelf 80, which image is taken by the TV camera 20A, is transmitted to
25 the inventory computer 50A or 50B or a later-described mobile information terminal 50C via the control computer 10A, the telephone line 60 and